

Coins

Fake writes finish to thrill of a lifetime

By Roger Boye

WHEN A FLORIDA collector received a 1977-dated cent in change recently, he was in for the thrill of his collecting life.

The numeral "6" could be seen below the last "7" in the date, which meant the coin was probably a very rare "overdate." The collector sent the coin to the United States Mint for examination and news of his find excited many coin dealers. At least one dealer offered \$300 for similar 1977/6 overdates. After all, some dealers said, the last overdate made by the Mint was a 1942/1 dime, and that sells today for \$2,000 in uncirculated condition.

But the excitement was short-lived. Less than two weeks ago, a U.S. Mint assistant director said the coin was a fake. The collector was out a cent (the Mint confiscated his coin), and the

hobby was out what seemed like the biggest coin find of 1977.

Incidentally, overdates were relatively common in the 18th and 19th centuries. Mint employees would take unused dies from the previous year and stamp the current year's date over the old date in the die (coins are made from dies). This practice is no longer followed, and only six overdates exist in 20th-Century U.S. coins.

ONLY ONE Chicago-area resident, Paul R. Whitnah, 30, is among the 21 candidates running for election to the American Numismatic Association's board of governors. (The ANA is the nation's largest coin collecting organization.)

Nine persons will be elected to the board, each for a two-year term. Current board member Glenn B. Smedley of La Grange Park is not seeking re-election.

In an interview last week, Whitnah was critical of some actions taken by the present board. For example, he said he supported in theory the ANA's official grading book, which should be published in the next several months. But he criticized the current board members for having approved publication last August without having first read the manuscript.

Having once read the manuscript, the board members had to order that revisions be made, not a good method of operation, Whitnah said. He added that he would support the grading book once revisions have been completed and approved.

Ballots have been mailed to the 33,000 ANA members who must vote before next Sunday. Results will be announced at the ANA convention Aug. 23-28 in Atlanta.